

DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF COMMUNICATIONS OF THE UNASUR MEMBER STATES

The Ministers of Communications of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) Member States, assembled in the city of Brasilia on November 29, 2011, within the framework of the South American Infrastructure and Planning Council (COSIPLAN):

1. *Stressing* the importance of the creation of COSIPLAN, a body of UNASUR that provides high-level political support to the strategies aimed at strengthening the integration of physical infrastructure in the region, and therefore deciding to address matters specific to communications within the South American physical integration process, in the light of the principles set out in the UNASUR Constitutive Treaty and the COSIPLAN Statutes and Regulations,

2. *Recalling* the work of COSIPLAN in drafting the Strategic Action Plan (PAE) 2012-2022, which will be submitted for the consideration of the South American Ministers at the II Meeting of the COSIPLAN Ministers,

3. *Supporting* the inclusion in the PAE of a guideline to encourage the intensive use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) with a view to overcoming geographical and operational barriers in South America, and furthermore promoting the advancement of projects concerning the integration of the South American region through the use of ICT tools with environmental responsibility and social participation by fostering the improvement of communications infrastructure as well as its interconnection, an increase in the regional contents available on the networks, the enhancement of the technical and economic conditions related to international roaming, the improvement of the quality of the services provided, and the democratization of access and affordability for the sake of the people of the countries in the region, with particular emphasis on the relatively less developed countries,

4. *Recognizing* that the current level of development of communications infrastructure in the territory of UNASUR imposes serious constraints on the full attainment of the Union's objective to create a regional space that is integrated in political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, energy, and infrastructure terms, and also constitutes an ever greater obstacle to eradicating socioeconomic inequality, achieving social inclusion, strengthening citizen participation, and reducing asymmetries in the South American region,

Agree as follows:

5. The development of public policies concerning health, employment, education, security, and public administration, among others, is strengthened by the

democratic and affordable use of broadband Internet, bringing about greater equality and social inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of our peoples, which is in line with the objectives pursued by UNASUR, as well as encouraging the inclusive, democratic, and socially and environmentally responsible economic growth of the South American countries. Furthermore, investments in this field promote the creation of productive employment and income in both a direct and an indirect manner.

6. It is imperative to expand, in the next few years, the interconnection between the South American countries and the international exit points via submarine communications cable, considering the rapid increase in the demand for traffic through fiber-optic networks capable of transmitting data through broadband connections as well as meeting demands of scientific applications. This is expected to speed up communications between the South American countries and to reduce the costs involved in transmitting data via international routes, which in turn will result in greater sovereignty over telecommunications traffic between the region and the rest of the world.

7. The Ministers of Communications shall support the integration of national research and education networks in the intra-regional and global contexts; encourage the use of state-of-the-art applications in the fields of education, health and research; and increase scientific and technical collaboration, the creation of knowledge as well as competitiveness in the South American countries.

8. It should be stressed that, in many South American countries, the factor that contributes the most to high costs is traffic through international gateways. The poor interconnection of the UNASUR countries leads to an increase in the cost of using international routes and negatively affects its Member States' sovereignty over communications. At the same time, Internet data traffic has doubled each year over the last decade, and this rate of growth is expected to continue and even rise in the coming years.

9. The Ministers of Communications shall promote actions to build a South American Fiber Optic Ring, which will provide connections within and between the South American countries and facilitate their communication with other continents. This Ring will reduce the cost of data transmission between the countries and, consequently, the consumer price of Internet services for the sake of the South American communities. Moreover, the Ministers of Communications shall design and coordinate strategies intended to aggregate traffic in the region.

10. The Ministers of Communications shall encourage the inclusion in regional integration projects, such as road corridors and energy transmission lines, of the installation of fiber optic networks, in view of the resource savings and the synergies resulting from its association with large infrastructure works.

11. The Ministers of Communications shall coordinate actions to stimulate the establishment of content delivery centers and networks in South America as well

as to create and disseminate local and regional content with the purpose of increasing the relative importance of intra-regional traffic.

12. The Ministers of Communications shall coordinate efforts to promote the regional development and production of equipment and components for the deployment of the network infrastructure supporting broadband services with a view to stimulating technological and industrial development in South America.

13. Recognizing the agreements concerning interconnectivity reached in the context of the Regional Dialogue on Broadband, the Ministers of Communications undertake to take due account in their public policies of the recommendations set forth in the Declaration of the Fourth Meeting of the Regional Dialogue on Broadband dated October 21, 2011.

14. The Ministers of Communications recommend that, to give concrete expression to the provisions of paragraph 3 above, the COSIPLAN Ministers should create a Working Group on Telecommunications in South America. Pursuant to Articles 4(e) and 6 of the COSIPLAN Statutes and as provided for in Subsection 5.3 of its Strategic Action Plan, this Working Group shall prepare a roadmap with specific actions within a 90-day time frame. Finally, the Ministers of Communications also recommend that the purpose of the tasks of this Group may be included in the PAE as a sectoral process, under the terms of Objective 6 of the Plan, and that the first activities to be undertaken by the Working Group may be incorporated into the Work Plan 2012.

[ORIGINAL SIGNED]

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